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Department of State
To Whom It May Concern:

10/18/2003

I am writing about my concern over the proposed Hague regulations for international adoption. I feel adoption of these regulations would create too many hardships for small and medium size adoption agencies.

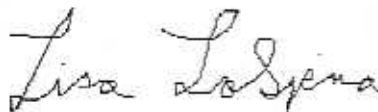
When I adopted my son in 1998, I worked with a wonderful small agency called Thursday's Child in Bloomfield, CT. This agency was established and is staffed mostly by people who themselves are adoptive parents. This agency has so much heart. The people there understand first hand how difficult it is to wait for a child. They offered personal support, which is unheard of with a large adoption agency. I did a lot of research before I adopted and decided I wanted the individual attention that only a small agency can achieve. I am afraid the proposed regulations would drive agencies like Thursday's Child out of business.

The proposed Hague regulations would take away the initiative and individuality of small adoption agencies. Standards for directors and social workers in the field are certainly a good thing. However, international adoption is very complex - it requires diplomacy, cross cultural sensitivity, strong ethics and experience. Many of the smaller agencies have many, many years of experience in adoption. The direct hands on experience of these people, is more valuable than any degree. To lose this treasure trove of experience would be such a waste.

Accreditation should not be so expensive or onerous as to shut out the small agencies. It has cost some agencies \$50,000 and upwards to be voluntarily approved by the Council on Accreditation. Accreditation will force them out of existence. The requirements for insurance coverage alone will be more than a small or even a medium sized agency can afford.

All of this will certainly increase adoptions costs for parents. The Hague was supposed to decrease those costs. The point is to find forever homes for children who need families and for parents who desperately want children to love and take care of. Many families will be shut out of the adoption process. At the very least they will be deprived of their freedom of choice.

Sincerely,



Lisa LaSpina
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